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FROM THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

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SUBJECT: 30TH SESSION OF THE FAO COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD
SECURITY, 20-23 SEPTEMBER 2004

REF: (A) ROME 2810; (B) USUN NEW YORK 2189,
C) ROME 3669; (D) ROME 3681

1. Summary. The annual session of FAO's Committee on World Food Security (CFS) discussed the world food security situation and follow-up to the World Food Summit (WFS), noting uneven progress among countries and regions. The Committee:

-- asked that a working group of experts be convened to discuss options for improving the WFS reporting format;

-- agreed to hold a stakeholder dialogue at the next CFS meeting (in May 2005) to prepare for a 2006 Special Forum to review WFS progress;

-- heard a progress report on the International Alliance Against Hunger; and

-- unanimously approved a set of "Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security."

2. Among the related activities for CFS delegates were an Oversight Panel that reviewed progress by FAO's Special Program for Food Security, and a USG-sponsored side event that highlighted the G8 commitments to help increase agricultural productivity in Africa. In plenary statements and other discussions, the U.S. delegation emphasized the role of good governance, rule of law, integration into the global economy, increased productivity, and HIV/AIDS prevention in solving problems of food insecurity. End summary.

OVERVIEW

3. The CFS held its 30th Session on September 20-23, 2004, at FAO Headquarters in Rome. The CFS is a forum within the United Nations system for discussing world food security and is responsible for monitoring progress toward the international commitment made at the WFS in 1996 to halve the number of undernourished by 2015.

4. The US delegation was led by Eric Bost, Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, U.S.

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Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Ambassador Tony P. Hall of the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture. Also on the delegation were Darakel and Earl Gast of the USAID, and Brenda Qis and Sharon Kotok. The session was attended by 116 members of government and intergovernmental organizations involved in food security, including representatives of the world food community and progress.

6. Election of the CFS President. Out of about 70% of the world's population that are living in poverty, progress has been insufficient, it most often has been in states whose leaders have not embraced good governance, the rule of law, and integration into the global economy, or where conflict and state failure have made that choice impossible. Success in these states, the Ambassador noted, is not a matter of donor funds. He also highlighted USG contributions towards meeting the WFS goal, such as U.S. spending on school feeding programs in the developing world, programs to increase agricultural productivity, the Millennium Challenge Account, and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

8. In other interventions, U/S Bost and other U.S. delegation members: (a) offered practical suggestions on how to improve and simplify the existing format for national reporting on progress in implementing WFS goals;

(b) noted the unique contribution of an alliance to orchestrate civil society and private sector efforts with those of government to address hunger and poverty; and (c) stressed that a lasting solution to poverty and hunger requires the difficult work of improving domestic policies and institutions, increasing productivity, protecting private assets and incomes, providing appropriate market incentives for food production and distribution, fostering economic growth, and ensuring peace and stability.

CFS CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

19. Assessment of World Food Security Situation. The CFS noted the uneven progress in the fight against food insecurity among countries and regions. It reaffirmed that strategies aimed at poverty and hunger reduction need to be considered in the broader context of development. Delegates welcomed FAO's special coverage of trade in its latest assessment report, and recommended that this be one of the ongoing elements in future reports.

110. Revised WFS Progress Reporting Format. Concerns were widely shared among delegations about the revised reporting format and process. Many said that there were too many indicators and that the reporting requirements were burdensome and duplicative of reporting to other UN agencies, including for monitoring progress toward the goals of the Millennium Declaration. It was pointed out that the process does not adequately draw on existing work on Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS). Delegates put forward a number of proposals to improve the format, including: reducing the frequency of reporting; avoiding duplication of information on indicators by using the above-mentioned databases and formulating a set of key indicators; focusing on priority issues; and including new indicators on water and other natural resources. The Committee took note of these proposals and agreed that the Secretariat should convene a regionally balanced working group of experts to review various options. Following such review, the Secretariat should prepare a revised format for consideration by the CFS Bureau.

111. FIVIMS. The Committee, at the suggestion of the U.S. delegation, made the recommendation that FAO continue to enhance FIVIMS and cooperation among its partners in order to improve its assessment of world food security. Delegates, including the United States, recommended that FIVIMS work should inform selection of food security indicators of the WFS reporting as well as development of an appropriate analytical methodology and framework. It was also recommended that the CFS Secretariat work more closely with the FIVIMS Secretariat

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in that regard.

112. Special Forum in 2006 to Review WFS Progress. The Committee reaffirmed the WFS decision to convene, in 2006 and within existing resources, a Special Forum within the 32nd Session of the CFS to undertake a progress assessment of the implementation of the WFS Plan of Action. This would include a mid-term review of progress toward the target of halving the number of malnourished people by 2015. The CFS also agreed to hold, within available resources, a multi-stakeholder dialogue during the next CFS meeting (May 2005) to prepare for the 2006 Special Forum. This dialogue -- which was proposed by Brazil -- would involve governments, international organizations and civil society. NGO participation would be in accordance with FAO policies and ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 on the Consultative Relationship between the UN and NGOs.

113. International Alliance Against Hunger (IAAH). The CFS considered a progress report regarding the IAAH. The Committee called on governments and all others concerned

with combating hunger, to continue to use all means possible, including National Alliances in their countries, to fight hunger, but cautioned against duplication of efforts and proliferation of meetings. The Committee found the interactive website and register of IAAH member activities to be efficient ways to make connections and share information among food security stakeholders. It agreed on the voluntary nature of the Alliance and favored a cost-effective operation. Some delegates requested more information on the cost of the proposed IAAH annual meeting.

"RIGHT TO FOOD" VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

114. The CFS approved the "Voluntary Guidelines to

Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security." These guidelines were foreseen in the 1996 World Food Summit Plan of Action and were under negotiation by an Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) for the past two years (ref A). IGWG delegates -- most of them also CFS delegation members -- met in an informal "friends of the chair" format concurrently with the CFS to conclude the negotiation of the Guidelines.

15. In the last round of the IGWG, the U.S. delegation achieved all USG objectives. Most notably, we were able to resolve language on the law of war in a way approved by the Departments of State and Defense, language on unilateral measures that was modeled on standard language found in non-binding multilateral declarations (such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development and World Summit on the Information Society), and language on the international dimension that mirrored existing non-binding language negotiated in various multilateral fora.

16. A final IGWG session was convened in the middle of the CFS proceedings on 23 September to adopt the Guidelines and formally transmit them to the CFS. The last IGWG report and final text of the guidelines will be available at www.fao.org shortly. The United States was able to join consensus, but submitted a written statement for the record that included the following clarification:

[quote]
In joining in the adoption of these Voluntary Guidelines, the United States does not recognize any change in the current state of conventional or customary international law regarding rights related to food. The United States believes that the attainment of any "right to adequate food" or "fundamental freedom to be free from hunger" is a goal or aspiration to be realized progressively that does not give rise to any international obligations nor diminish the responsibilities of national governments toward their citizens.
[end quote]

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

17. "Summit of World Leaders for Action Against Hunger and Poverty." The Brazilian delegation at the CFS actively promoted the September 20 meeting of leaders and officials at UN Headquarters in New York (ref B). In the CFS Drafting Committee, the U.S. delegation was successful in restraining Brazilian attempts to characterize the New York "Summit" and ensuing Declaration within the CFS report in a manner that would convey broader international acceptance than was actually the case.

18. Africa Locust and Caribbean Hurricane Crises. Special attention was drawn by many delegations to the locust crisis afflicting vast swathes of western and northern Africa, although this was not formally on the agenda. U.S. Mission had been active in the weeks prior to the CFS to call greater attention to this problem and to deficiencies in FAO's response thus far (refs C, D). Some delegates highlighted the food security implications of the destruction caused in recent weeks by Jeanne and other hurricanes in the Caribbean region. These discussions prompted the Committee to recommend that FAO include "immediate threats to food security" as an agenda item at future CFS meetings.

ADDITIONAL RELATED EVENTS

19. CFS Lecture. Nobel Laureate Norman Borlaug delivered a lecture to the CFS on "The Green Revolution - An Unfinished Agenda." Dr. Borlaug highlighted the importance of agricultural research for increasing productivity and sustainable use of land and water resources, the role of biotechnology in further nutritional and productivity gains, and the importance of leadership skills for scientists to ensure adoption of promising technology.

20. G8 Initiative Side Event. U.S. Mission organized a panel discussion on the G8 commitments to Africa with a special focus on increasing agricultural productivity through capacity building (septel).

21. Other Side Events. A "High-Level Dialogue with Civil Society Leaders and Member Countries' National Alliance Leaders on the Development of the IAAH as a Leading Global, Political and Moral Force to End Hunger" was held. There was also a Seminar on Actions and Initiatives for Food Security.

22. Special Program for Food Security (SPFS) Oversight Panel. U.S. delegates were also observers at the SPFS Oversight Panel, which met concurrently with CFS on 0-21 September. SPFS is an FAO program aimed at increasing food production in low-income, food-deficit countries by emphasizing national ownership, public participation, technology transfer, social equity, sustainability and South-South cooperation. The Panel commended the progress made since SPFS began ten years ago. It supported moving 30 countries from the pilot phase to national-level programs, and recommended pilot phase in newly added requested addition to determine which up-scaling to a national program, and called for stronger linkages with research institutions. It also recommended more emphasis on high-risk groups such as women, and creation of "productive safety nets" by stimulating production for local markets.

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